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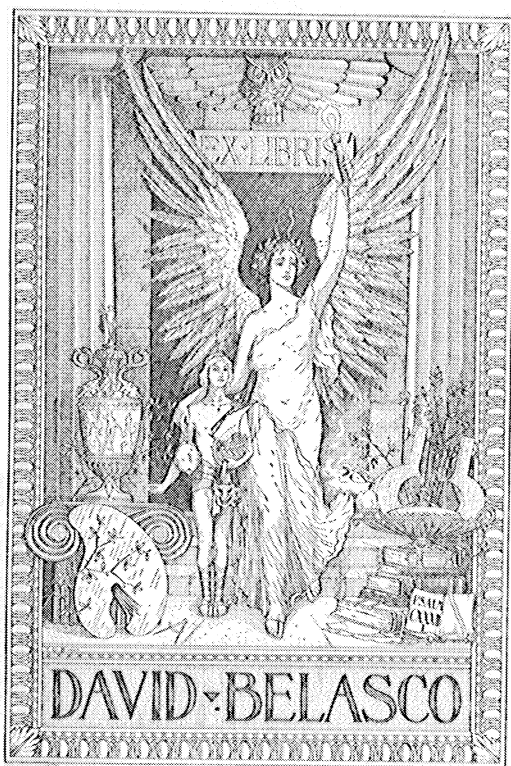
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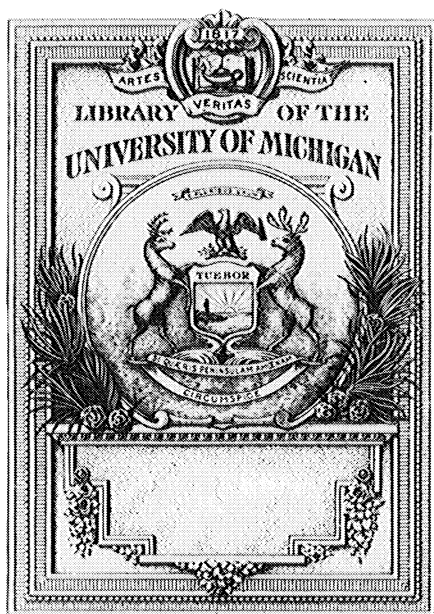
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# EDITH:

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

BY FRANCIS COPCUTT.

NEW-YORK:

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ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by  
**Francis Copcutt,**  
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for  
the Southern District of New-York.

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**EDITH.**

## CHARACTERS.

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ERNEST EGERTON.

HECTOR ALDINI.

DR. LAWRENCE.

MR. SIMPKINS.

CHILD.

JOHN GRANT.

First and Second Officers.

First and Second Players.

BANKER.

Servants, Clergyman, Boys, Messengers, etc.

EDITH CARLTON.

MARIA.

MRS. ALBERTON.

DINAH.

MRS. SMITH.

BRIDGET, Sewing Girls, Poor People, etc.

SCENE.—Country Seat near New-York, afterwards  
New-York City.

# EDITH: A PLAY.

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## ACT I.

### S C E N E I .

*A Library opening on a Garden.*

MARIA, (*Solus.*)

OF all the gentlemen who visit here, which is to be the happy man, and carry off dear Miss Edith? It puzzles me to death. I can't get the least clue. I thought it was Mr. Egerton, but he has not been here these ten days, and he used to drive out three times a week at least. That looks suspicious. I do hope Miss Edith has not declined the honor, and sent him off, for he is the only man worthy of her that I ever saw. Mr. Aldini comes every day, since he returned from Europe, but then he lives at the next villa, and his fine old Italian father comes almost as often. I do hope he is not the happy man. Poor Miss Carlton, in that case, I fear, would not be the happy woman. Asks, too, always for *my mistress*, and she is my dear, dear mistress; but then every body else knows that I am her foster sister, and has eyes enough to see that I am her companion. Always leading Mr. Grant off too, shooting, trotting horses, or some such stuff, when he knows that John is head-groom, head-farmer, and head every thing here outside of the house.

He ought to know better, and I am afraid he will spoil John. But he can't do that, no, for John is such a nice man, and makes me such pretty presents. Oh! I do like him so well. I wish, however, he wouldn't talk to me as if I was a horse. He calls me his pretty filly, and says I feel my oats. I am sure, I don't *feel* any thing of the sort. He said, when I boxed his ears the other day for attempting to kiss me, I ought to be put in traces with a kicking-strap. I wonder what a "kicking-strap" is. I told him he was already in the traces—of impudence. In spite of all, I am afraid I like him too well—but—does he like me—*well*? He looks at me so strangely at times that the blood mounts into my face, and I feel a tremor all over.—Oh! here comes Mr. Aldini: he has looked these two days as if all his friends were in heaven, and he was going to—the other place. If he was born here, he is no American. He has enough hot blood from his father and mother, to make half a dozen Italians. His face looks as if he had been in a cholera hospital for a month, or seen a ghost. Talk about the volcanoes in his own country, as I have heard him; why, he carries one in himself, smoke, fire, flame, lava, and all.—I don't like him a bit, he was saucy to me when he first returned, before he got the Edith mania, as I call it, and I had to keep out of his way. He is a bad man, and—he is *so* handsome.

[*Enter Hector.*

HECTOR.

Good morning, Maria! Is your mistress—is Miss Edith at home?

MARIA.

Yes, sir. She is in the conservatory. Shall I call her?

HECTOR.

Yes, if you please. Tell her I await her leisure.



MARIA.

You are looking quite ill, sir : can I do any thing for you ?

HECTOR.

Nothing.

MARIA, (*Aside.*)

Poor fellow !—I know what medicine he wants, bride's cake. He could digest a whole one and feel better for it. [*Exit.*]

HECTOR, (*Solus.*)

I would not pass another such a night for half a universe. Furies and fiends were fighting for my soul. It seemed as if scorpions were crawling over my flesh to sting me into madness, and yet (*Draws pistol*) I dared not end it. I had this beneath my pillow. The pressure of an ounce, and all would have been well, and yet I dared not. Fearful shapes came and glared on me, and grinned their horrid laughter. Her form came too, and—torment!—pressed to the bosom of another, and yet I dared not. My life is useless. I am borne down with torture, and yet this coward hand refused its office. These passion-flames are scorching up life like chaff. It seemed, the whole night long, as if the torments of that place about which fools prate and preach, were coursing through my being. I can not live so—I can not die—*so*, (*Holds up pistol.*) The daybreak came at last, after a year-long night, and hope came with it.

She has admirers, men who esteem her, and she lends a willing ear to each, to some a close attention, but they are the older and graver ones, With all she has a frank simplicity of manner, which disarms even suspicion itself. Her color never heightens when they come, nor fades as either leaves. There

can be no passion, love, without *some* symptom of it, and I have watched her with a passion-sharpened gaze, until her very heart seemed visible before my eyes, and found none. Nay, more, before that very gaze—mine! mine! I have seen her color come and go, her eyelids droop. She does not hate me, may be playing with her power. I will see her again, passion shall make me eloquent. I will conquer her—or make her own she loves another. If she say, yes!—then—then—why, then, this trusty friend with metal tongue shall answer, no! (*Replaces pistol in his pocket.*) And chance, annihilation, what you will, may take what's left of us. [*Enter Edith.*

EDITH.

Good morning, sir, I'm glad to see you. See my fair spoils, are they not lovely? I feel as if I was a second Atropos, when I go into the conservatory with my scissors, and cut the slender threads of their frail lives. Take some of them, will you not?

HECTOR, (*Abstractedly.*)

They are very pretty.

EDITH.

Is it not a charming day?

HECTOR.

Beautiful—I believe.

EDITH.

You will dine with us to day?

HECTOR.

No.

EDITH.

I wish you would, and with your father. Mine is always glad to see him, and so am I.

HECTOR.

I can not speak of all this, Miss Carlton. These aimless words are like laughing on the crust over a burning pit. O Edith! tell me you did but jest, when you refused my love, and said you could not wed me.

EDITH.

This!—again?

HECTOR.

It is a horrid dream. Tell me it is. Women have the right, you know, to play with us, when we are held secure. Tell me it was a jest. I'll laugh, too, at the folly, nay, bless you for it. Edith! your color comes and goes, when I am near—

EDITH.

Sir!

HECTOR.

Why, why is this? As children we grew up almost together, and now, here, you give me more of your time than any other one, yet you say no. Your eyelids droop beneath my ardent gaze, and yet you say no. This is girlish modesty, or trifling. Edith, you are mine!

EDITH.

Sir!—(*Aside.*) What shall I do?

1\*

HECTOR.

Mine, by all these symptoms, and dearer to me than life to any sinking wretch. These flowers, which you have given me, are emblems of yourself. You have touched them with your lips, your breath has mixed with their perfume: you would not give them if you hated me, nay, if you were indifferent. Tell me, they have a meaning, (*Covers her face with her hands.*) They have! They have! Edith, does not the God of whom you speak so much, teach you to love all things? Spare some of this love for me. All! all! I must have all! Then I will worship Him and you. See, you could save a soul in loving me.

EDITH.

Blasphemer!

HECTOR.

Fancy has turned to sentiment, sentiment blazed into love, and love flashed into a passion, which will consume my soul, unless you bid it stay. Edith, I stand upon the chasm's edge, and you have placed me there. Deep down the forked flames are waiting to devour, and you alone can save me. Do it! Then my love shall circle you as with a wall of fire and radiance.—I will wander with you over the world, if travel be your pleasure.—Will lavish wealth, if you will that.—Write, move the multitude, and on the waves of popular applause ride into power, if you will it so, and lay the trophies of my victories at your feet, piled high as your ambition soars. Look in my face, see what one short night has done. The torments of the damned were coursing through my veins, as the dread hours went on. I can not, will not bear it. You can change all this, and bid me live again. The lightning of this unfathomable

passion flashing on you, Edith, it must awaken something in return, if you be human. Say you love me. You do! you do! I waken from this terrible dream and live. (*Kneels, catches her hand suddenly, and kisses it; she shrinks back indignantly.*)

EDITH.

You wrong me in what you say, and wrong yourself much more. Rise, sir! this is degrading to us both. This subject I have forbidden these several times, and yet you force it on me, force me to speak fully too, you so misrepresent my every word and act. Your father was an exile from his native land, and for that cause, and for his high intelligence, was always welcome beneath my father's roof; and so as children we were thrown together, but since the meanings of the word affection first flashed upon my heart, till now, I have never spoken a word to you which would bear a tender meaning.

HECTOR.

Edith, you have! You—

EDITH.

Listen, sir, or I leave the room instantly, and see you no more: I will not listen further. You grew to manhood, went to Rome; we parted with no word, save an every-day good by; you never wrote me, never asked to write. I doubt if I lived in your memory, much less your feelings, if I may believe all that is told about your gay and reckless life there. You came again, met me unmoved except a sudden glance and start at my changed face and form. Then this passion first arose in you, boundless and overwhelming. You let it have full way, and made no effort of the will to stem its hopeless current.

HECTOR.

Hopeless ! It shall not—

EDITH.

Listen, and hold your peace. You have touched my honor in misconstruing my acts and words, and I will speak. You were nurtured near our house in a religious neighborhood and with religious teaching. You went away—returned, and I was pained to see how a few short years had undermined your character. For all your art could not conceal that you scoffed at what I held most dear, my hope of immortality. I trembled for you then, read to you, talked with you, gave you all the hours I could in the vain, foolish hope to win you back again. I offered you my cup filled up with anxious warning and with the wish to save a soul for heaven, and from it you drank passion to the dregs, and now dare to assert I offered that. You think too I may jest in saying that I shrink from this mad and unhallowed passion. Sir ! a man can pay no higher compliment to one of us, than ask her hand, if it be done in single-mindedness and for her sake alone, unless he give his life, and I esteem it so, nor hold it lightly, pitying her who does, and feeds her vanity with such a sacred thing as any human being's love.

I would gladly garner up my secret in my heart, but it is best you should know all. I love another ! (*Hector half draws his pistol as he starts back and whispers hoarsely.*)

HECTOR.

Who ?

EDITH.

Ernest Egerton.

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

It is he who told these tales then—blood!—blood!

EDITH.

You have met him in Rome. He is on a visit to his mother now, and may return at any hour. I am his affianced bride, have loved him since my girlhood. Why should I speak or act to entangle you? You know me better. Why, if my heart was not preoccupied, sooner than share this Ætna-passion-flame, which you miscall love, and which with its burning lava would make an arid plain of life, rather than teeming fields of help, and usefulness; or mate myself with an intelligence which I fear has forgotten its God, I would shut myself forever from the world, or welcome death itself. We must not meet again. Must not! Farewell. (*Hector draws his pistol as she turns, and moves slowly away, levels it at her and shudders, then points it at his own head and shudders, then hides it hurriedly as she turns back.*) Hector, forgive me. I would not harm the meanest thing that lives if I could help it. Let us part friends. Here, take these flowers in token you forgive me, will you not?

[*Exit weeping. Hector crushes the flowers, drops them, and draws his pistol.*]

HECTOR.

A curse upon her life, for she has blighted mine. Back, useless sprite, (*Conceals pistol.*) I dare not use you, though I call you up so often to do my bidding. I must find means more noiseless to crush the — things.

[*Exit, laughing hysterically.*]

*Enter* MARIA.

My dear Edith is crying, and when I kissed her she returned

it, but no word of confidence. She tells me less and less every day, and— Oh!

*Enter ERNEST, (Rings a bell.)*

Ah! Maria, I did not see you. Are you well?

MARIA.

Quite well, thank you, and glad to see you here again.

ERNEST.

How is—? (*Enter servant.*) Is Miss Carlton in?

SERVANT.

Yes sir.

ERNEST.

Tell her I await her leisure if you please. (*Exit servant.*)  
How is Miss Edith, Maria?

MARIA.

Well—as she always is. Her life is like a flower's—disease never touches it. I will call her myself, (*Aside.*) Oh! I am so glad he is here again. Miss Edith has not gathered an orange-blossom for weeks. Why are they spared? He has not had the mitten *yet* at any rate, I can see *that* in his face. [*Exit.*]

ERNEST, (*Solus.*)

You look down upon me with a welcoming smile, old friends. You have been witnesses to many an hour of calm and holy love, and I like you all for that, as well as for the thoughts and sentiments I have borrowed from your pages. You never laugh nor frown, although you make me do so often. Strange beings are ye, with your looks of calm and peaceful seeming.



*Enter EDITH, (Sadly.)*

I am very glad to see you back again.

ERNEST.

Edith, my own, (*Kisses her forehead.*)

EDITH.

You found your mother well? And asked her in my name if she would love me?

ERNEST.

I did, indeed; but she already knows you, Edith.

EDITH.

Knows me?

ERNEST.

Yes, many years ago, when you were but a child, she saw you at your uncle's house, played with, caressed, and loved you then, and says she longs for the day when she may call you daughter. She sends you back her blessing, Edith. You are weeping dearest; has any thing occurred to sadden you while I was absent?

EDITH.

Not much. "The dead past buries its dead," when you come. My tears are more of joy than sorrow. See Ernest, here are flowers I gathered for your coming. Ha! some are crushed and fallen. (*Aside.*) This grieves me much. (*Aloud.*) Are they not lovely—BEINGS. Their fresh fragrance, unseen, impalpable, so fills the space, they sometimes seem to me an actual spiritual presence. Come near the casement, Ernest, I do not breathe freely here, the rooms seem small and close. How lovely is the early spring. See, Ernest, the sun holds out

his hands full of glancing beams to scatter them over the chilled earth, that he may awaken Nature to her frolicking with the flowers, and to the embraces of his passionate love. To awaken her indeed to their nuptials, dressed in hyacinths, jonquils, violets, and green leaf-buds.

ERNEST.

Yes, love, and do they not even now stand before the altar of heaven, to be joined together by the Great High-Priest who gave them life, and who in due time will bless her with maternity and with fruit? See the moon there, almost hid in the sparkling daylight, and the light floating clouds are arrayed in white for the bridal; and see too, some of them, older and wiser perhaps than the rest, are shedding a few rain-tears; for well they know, that there will be storms and clouds as well as sunshine in their summer love.

EDITH.

And hear the sweet bird-serenade for Nature's marriage: our hearts their audience. Are they not a large one, Ernest?

ERNEST.

Yes, love, I feel they are; but the storms and clouds—do you ever think of them?

EDITH.

I do, and often. Life to me is no May-day dream, amongst flowers, and music, and pleasures. With all true men, you often say, it is "a battle and a march;" with us it is a sphere to "suffer and grow strong in," if we be true. The love which arches life as with a rainbow, and colors it, is a halo fresh from heaven, and makes our task here sacred—besides, we must live apart.

ERNEST.

Apart?

EDITH.

Yes, Ernest, one must die *first*, and both will die. With this before us, it seems like swallowing that drug which gives a moment's flash of fearful joy, and then a world of suffering and woe, to live a life of pleasure.

ERNEST.

These are sadder thoughts than are your wont.

EDITH.

They are, and yet I would not change them for the gayest in the world.

Two nights ago I sat at the open window, hour after hour, and thought of you. The Great Mother had spread her quilt of darkness, sparkling with mysterious needle-work, over her little ones, and was hushing them to sleep, after the toil of the long day. The moon came up like a guardian angel, and seemed to say, "Peace, be still," as it stood there, in the silent sky, while its beams scattered themselves over the trees, and over the distant houses, white, and calm, and holy, as if no sin, nor sickness, nor sorrow, nor remorse, lurked under their silvered roofs. What were you doing then, my own Ernest? What were you thinking of?

ERNEST.

Talking to my mother long after midnight, love, and mostly of yourself.

EDITH.

I thought so. Thought so at the time. I felt you were. Ernest!

ERNEST.

Well ?

EDITH.

Tell me—for it has troubled my thoughts much, lately, and colored my dreams too much. The wild passion which romances treat of, and which I had thrown aside, (*Aside*,) until now—as exaggerated or false, is it love ? Can it be that or even mixed with it ? Or has the sacred thing which we call love relationship with that ? It sorely puzzles me, (*Playfully*.) Put on your philosophic cap, dear Ernest, and tell me all about it. Will you not ?

ERNEST.

I will try. Sit here. To ask what love *is*, were like demanding of what the soul is formed. The Highest alone can tell. After our utmost analyzing, they still remain the same deep mystery. But that which you would learn I think is more within our grasp, (*Reflects a moment, then takes a flower.*) This rose is love—

EDITH.

Is love ?

ERNEST.

Yes, we will call it so. You see it grew in the earth. There, in the gross soil. That soil is passion, and covers the roots only of the plant. This flower has unfolded and acquired its beauty above the earth, in the sunshine, the showers, and the air. They are affection, friendship, kindness, truth.

EDITH.

Go on !

ERNEST.

You see that *this* is not earth, nor sunshine, nor shower, nor

air; it is a flower, partaking of their natures. A glorious and beautiful emanation from all, yet distinct from each. Cut this flower from its earth-covered roots, it dies. Exclude the sun, the air, the shower, or either of them, still it dies. Now we will speak of love. Love springs from passion, has its roots there, has no life without, and grows and unfolds into its wondrous beauty in the affections and higher sentiments.

The man with passion in his nature, but without these, has feelings for your sex which are low and debasing. Even if he have intellect, it is but the ornamental framework round a monster; he can not *love*.

EDITH, (*Aside*.)

He pictures the miserable Hector.

ERNEST.

Again, take one who has no passion in his nature, though he have all the rest; he may be entertaining, learned, wise, and a good friend; but still he can not love, and so on in degree through all the various developments of our nature, up to that equally balanced one, in which true love, that most beautiful existence short of heaven, that reflex of divinity itself, takes root and comes to life. And then in friendship, tenderness, and truth, it grows in such luxuriance that it *hides* the passion-earth from which it springs.

EDITH.

Then is there no platonic love?

ERNEST.

None. It would be like cold caloric, or planting a seed in the air, and expecting it to spring into a thing of light and

beauty. Let us go into the garden, love, we will speak farther of this.

EDITH.

Yes, there Ernest, where the infinite sky domes the chamber, and the song-birds are your auditors as well as I. Come!

[*Exit.*

*Enter* MARIA.

My dear mistress permits me to do so little for her, that I have half my time unoccupied except in reading. [Reads.

*Enter* JOHN.

Good morning, beauty.

MARIA.

Good morning, beast. What is the news in your kingdom? What have the horses been teaching you?

JOHN.

How to break in a woman.

MARIA.

Well, how is it?

JOHN.

We don't tell a three-year-old what a halter means, until it is round its neck. It wouldn't be so easy catching then. I want *Youatt* if you please. Mr. Carlton took it from the stable. One of my subjects is drooping.

MARIA, (*Giving him a book.*)

You read nothing but that stupid book. It is your Bible. If you were not forever "curing" the horses, they would not

be sick so often. I don't believe, John, you would go to heaven if you had a chance.

JOHN.

Why?

MARIA.

Because there are no horses there. If you attempted the voyage you would never go beyond Saturn.

JOHN.

Why, my filly?

MARIA.

Because your spirit would be sure to take horses with it, and there is a ring at Saturn to ride in, (*Points to book.*) Which is sick now?

JOHN.

"Ariel." Miss Edith can't ride out to-day.

MARIA.

She would not ride if there were fifty Ariels. She is dreaming of a fool's paradise, and riding her fancy there.

JOHN.

What is a fool's paradise?

MARIA.

A little golden circle, large enough to hold that.

[*Holding up her finger.*]

JOHN.

I'm glad you think so, Maria,

[*He attempts to kiss her; she boxes his ears and shrinks back.*]

MARIA.

Take that for your impertinence, for I *don't* think so—If that's part of your “breaking in,” it's a failure. Please, John, don't be rude; I didn't mean to hurt you; indeed I didn't. Have I?

JOHN.

No, you Puss, not a bit. By the way, what is the matter with Mr. Aldini? I saw him going down the avenue as if he had the blind staggers. I always thought he was “all action and no go.” I'll put up two to one on Mr. Egerton against him on the field. How is it, Maria?

MARIA, (*Courtesying.*)

I—never—tell—secrets—Mr.—Grant.

[*Exit.*JOHN, (*imitating.*)

Especially—when—you—don't—know—them, Miss—Maria. You want breaking in, you do, and a curb-bit.

[*Exit, rubbing his ear.*SCENE II. (*A street.*)

[*Enter* HECTOR, and DINAH *following.* HECTOR *crosses the stage without stopping.*

DINAH.

Massa Hector! Massa Hector! Dat you, sure enough. Give ole Dinah something! Out of prison now, and nothing to eat. Didn't steal dem tings, nohow.

HECTOR.

Go to the devil, hag.

[*Knocks her down. Exit.*



DINAH, (*Sitting up.*)

No! I don't go dar nohow; you go first, you will. You needn't go, any way; you's devil's self, you is. Your father put me in prison 'cause tings got in my box theyselves, they did. You knock down ole Dinah 'cause she nuss you when you war little tooty baby, you do; you aint no sort of man. Oh! my! I'se killed dead.—O lor!

[*Exit, running.*]

*Enter first and second Officers, and cross stage while speaking.*

FIRST OFFICER.

That man looks as if he had lost his soul, or his sweetheart.

SECOND OFFICER.

If there is a murder reported at the station when we get back, I shall be after him and no mistake.

### SCENE III.

(*Gambling hell—on one side a supper-table—persons drinking—on the other side a gaming table—persons playing.*)

*Enter HECTOR. He crosses hurriedly—drinks several times at the supper-table—looks at players—drinks again.*

BANKER.

Make up your game.

HECTOR.

Five hundred on the red, (*Drinks.*)

BANKER.

Red loses.

HECTOR.

Five hundred on the red, (*Players crowd round, excited.*)  
Gone. Damn the chances. Five hundred on the red.

BANKER.

Black wins. (*Hector drinks and returns.*)

HECTOR.

One thousand on the black.

BANKER.

Red wins.

HECTOR.

One thousand on the black.

BANKER.

Double zero. I clear the board.

HECTOR, (*Going to the supper-table, staggering.*)

Waiter, brandy. (*Pours brandy into tankard, and drinks deeply; returns to table.*) Ten thousand on the black. (*Throws down pocket book and hat.*) Ten thousand devils. Ten thou—(*Draws bowie knife—players scatter—Hector raves round the stage.*) Off there! off! She is mine! Blood! blood! [*Two players catch his arms; he falls drunk.*]

*Curtain.*

## A C T I I .

## SCENE I.

*A drawing-room, ERNEST, EDITH, and child discovered, child at EDITH's feet.*

ERNEST, (*Reading as the curtain rises.*)

"Mrs. May knelt there hour after hour, far into the night, until her servants were alarmed, and they came and accosted her. But she answered them calmly, and left the grave with a blessed peace in her heart. And they drove over the lonely road, and through the quiet and deserted streets towards her desolate home, a sad, but a wiser, a better being, for her soul had known the *divine* depth; her heart had become the *sanctuary* of sorrow. God had taken away her loved one for a time, but he had given his own love in return; and she wept no more."

EDITH, (*Weeping, and taking her child to her bosom.*)

It is a sweet and simple tale. The most saddening one I have heard this many a day.

ERNEST.

It is indeed most sad; and yet it was a blessed loss. Heaven sent its grace to fill the void that Death had made, and that she might have lost if she had kept her child. Edith, dear, is not little Ernest's face paler to-day than usual?

EDITH.

Ernest! (*Clutching his arm*) you have read this wicked story to warn me of some coming horror. For heaven's sake, tell me is he ill? Is he ill, Ernest? My eyes are blinding; I can not see the boy.

ERNEST.

My dear wife, I give you my word I had no shadow of such a thought. He has been playing half the day, and so—fatigued, that's all.

EDITH.

Thank heaven! O Ernest! the love I bear that child so fills and flows about my being it has become its air and light, and I droop as the flowers do for rain when he is from my side. My heart swells in gratitude for him; my soul praises the Highest for him. His life over-arches mine like a bow of promise to fallen man, to bid him hope.

ERNEST.

The love you bear our child, my dear wife, is true, and deep, and beautiful, but it is more than these unfortunately, and marks your brow with lines it should not bear these ten years. I have thought of this much lately, and must speak of it. This fair child was given us to love and cherish, guard and train aright for Him who gave it; not for an *idol*, dearest.

EDITH.

Ah! Ernest, you do not love him as I do.

ERNEST.

Perhaps not, yet I do love him well. It seemed, indeed, as if another spirit came and dwelt within me when he was born.

Before, I read, worked, dreamed, and thought, that *I* might be developed and have a clearer insight into myself—my Author and his works. Now! I seem to do it in and through this little one, and for a higher, holier purpose. It would lower all this much to idolize him.

EDITH.

But, Ernest, what would you have me do? My love rises from my soul at times in such overwhelming floods, I could not stay it if I would. It carries thought and judgment all away, and comes, too, with such yearning depth it sometimes brings the heart-ache with it. I never knew before what "dark with excess of light" could mean. I paint his future daily. Dream such dreams of him, and wake to find the seed of my blessed visions planted here. Sometimes he is a winged cherub, flying in circles over my head, which circles turn to haloes as he moves. Sometimes in manhood, too, he comes and moves the crowd with glowing words of fire, which sway and mould it to his will and thoughts. Again, the senate listens to him as his eloquence would save the nation, or raise it to another height. And once, he bent over the death-couch of his gray-haired mother, her task all done, and as the angel summoned her to judgment, took her last breath, and gave his blessing back. What would you have me do?

ERNEST.

Edith! The days vanish into the past eternity; and the years roll on. You may die soon.

EDITH.

Well! and perhaps it would be *well*. The thought has little terror in it, Ernest, for myself, and sometimes none.

ERNEST.

I know your courage, dearest—have seen it tried almost to the bitter end, where men would quail, and yet you smiled, because the child was safe. Edith! I in a few weeks or even days may die and leave you.

EDITH.

What *do* you mean?

ERNEST.

Nothing, love, but that all must die, and most of us, too, with little warning. We should reflect on that, and be prepared.

EDITH.

It would be a weary life without you, Ernest. Were it not for him, I should pray to follow you before you had reached the stars on that long journey.

ERNEST.

“Were it not for him!” Why, Edith, he may die to-morrow.

EDITH, (*Rising and seizing his arm.*)

You will kill me; nay, this is fearful, Ernest. What is this dreadful mystery?

ERNEST.

No mystery, love, only the swift-winged messenger may be sent at any moment to take back this little life, which has been lent to you, not given. Sent to be trained for heaven, not to keep. You hide this from your very soul, and go on worshipping your *idol*. I would have you think of it, and check, if possible, what is unhealthy, and may, perhaps, be

found hereafter wicked in your love. And for this end, perhaps, it is well we read that tale of wo. Read it again, dearest, and think of what I have said. Now we will see this sufferer that you spoke of, and take our darling with us, (*They rise; EDITH arranges her bonnet.*) A sad sight met my eyes this morning, Edith.

EDITH.

It was!

ERNEST.

Your quondam lover, Hector Aldini. He had been drinking, and has reached nearly the lowest stage of degradation.

EDITH.

Alas! alas! It has caused me many a sad and solemn hour, but yet I can not blame myself. He broke his father's heart, too. The old man told me, with bitter tears, that all his hopes had been centred there, and that all were blasted. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*Street — Enter HECTOR slightly intoxicated — singing “Old Hundred” — poorly dressed and with a shabby old hat.*

HECTOR.

Wish I could “get religion.” Devil take me if I can; I’ve prayed, knelt, sung, and offered the sisters pattern piety, and the head-devils money; but it’s no go. Father died and left me twelve-and-a-half cents, drank two horns of brandy with it to his memory. Sister’s asleep; got a marble quilt on her bed, poor thing. Now her Puritanical Yankee husband’s

dead, too. Left me five thousand dollars, on condition that I'd reform, and "jine the church;" curse him, (*Sings "Old Hundred."*) Been to forty D.D.'s, fifty REV.'s, and fourteen sextons. No use; curse 'em all; they won't let this brother into the pale, this lamb into the fold. You're a pretty fellow to go to heaven, (*Punching his hat*;) why didn't you stay in the back ground, then I'd have got in, (*Smashes hat on his head.*) They say I'm a wolf in sheep's clothing. Guess the sheep didn't mind losing his wardrobe. I've been to the dépôts of all the railroads to heaven in town, but the conductors won't sell, lend, or give me a ticket. All exclusive extras for saints: what are sinners to do? What's the use of having railroads to heaven if nobody but the stockholders can get tickets? I would give half my legacy for one, and promise not to ride their fool's hobby, either. I have one chance left, and will try that. A man of ready parts, who has left the fire in his blacksmith's forge to deal out fire and brimstone to a crowd he has gathered round him and calls a church; and one, they say, who will sell his soul for a consideration. (*Enter ERNEST, EDITH, and child—they cross the stage without stopping.*) Curse them all. What they are I should be, could have been more, had not this slimy siren and that hated lordling there crossed my path. I have cursed them both until cursing has lost its point, and seems a child's prattle. Nerved my arm again and again to strike, as I have stolen after them in the darkness, and recoiled at the last moment. Had I this being in my power, where gibbet and prison-house cast no fearful shadows, the beguiling hated wretch, I would choke her life out as she knelt for mercy, and looked in horror at me—the work her hand has made. And so the years go by, and vengeance sleeps. I will yet awaken it, so help me all the fiends. A child, too, and like him. I would give half of my life for the brat's heart's blood, and be revenged indeed. A child! Her



child! Ha! ha! ha! "I'll have it, but I'll not keep it long." Money must be had. It shall be. And this liquid fire that is parching up my being, shall never pass my lips again until the work is done. This world is a humbug, gambling-hell, bar-room, larder, where he who wins is happy, and he who is miserable has thrown away his cards or had them stolen. They have stolen mine, but shall not win the game. So help me gods and devils, (*Enter JOHN.*) (*Aside.*) Ha! Satan sent you here to help me. It is well.

JOHN.

Well, old hoss, times *is* changed. You want grooming, you do. You want your fetlocks off and a pair of clipping scissors. Why, an omnibus horse wouldn't share his harness with you.

HECTOR.

John, are you still with the Carltons or Egertons?

JOHN.

No, they said I killed the young ones' saddle-horse; and thought, I reckon, I was too sweet on Maria. They gave me leave to go some time since.

HECTOR.

But Maria has lived in town this long while.

JOHN.

I saw her often enough. They were at the old place every week.

HECTOR.

Do you love this girl?

JOHN.

That's my business.

HECTOR.

Do you think I am poor?

JOHN.

*Rither*—Should say your last dime had got to the other side of Jordan by this time.

HECTOR.

Well, I am not. I am rich. I have had a legacy left me, and not yet used it. You knew the ring of my metal in old times, I think?

JOHN.

That's so.

HECTOR.

Now listen. I have work to do in which you can help me, I think, and if you do, five hundred dollars will be jingling there (*Pointing to his pocket*) before the week 's over.

JOHN.

Now don't you be fooling a fellow. It would not be kind of you, Mr. Aldini. I staked my last dollar on Lady Suffolk, and lost. Five hundred! why I would sell myself body and soul for that just now. I can draw a ton and not be galled if there is good feed ahead.

HECTOR.

I want neither soul nor body, only a little of your cunning. Do you love this girl?

JOHN.

Bah! I broke her in.

HECTOR.

What do you mean by that?

JOHN.

I've sworn twenty times I would marry the simpleton, and work in double harness. She believed me; that's her business. The pretty jade kicked at first, and threatened to break things. Then she took to whimpering and crying. The last time she saw me I told her I couldn't and wouldn't marry her. She looked as white as the old grey, and fainted too, I guess; didn't wait to see. Saw a crowd collecting there after I had got off some distance. What is your work? out with it.

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

The evil one has sent me a better tool than I could have hoped for. (*Aloud.*) Did you see the Egertons pass just now?

JOHN.

Yes, sir, colt and all.

HECTOR.

I have taken a fancy to the brat, and should like to help bring it up in the way it should go.

JOHN, (*Aside.*)

So, so, old sores not healed up yet; and that's the liniment. (*Aloud.*) Can't be done. It's guarded like a race-horse the day before the run. Why you might as well stop Bay Duke when he's got the blind staggers, as get hold of that chick.

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HECTOR.

You are as great a simpleton as your sweetheart. Do you know their rooms?

JOHN.

Well, I guess I do. I have been through them often to help Maria fix things.

HECTOR.

The thing is as simple as lying. See Maria again; swear the twenty-first time you will marry her. She will believe you; they always do. Does she carry the keys—and with her?

JOHN.

Yes, always.

HECTOR.

Toy with her until you can get hold of them. Have a little wax in your hand, and take the impression of her room-key. Go again the next night. Treat the servants liberally. You know them all. Drug something for Maria; feign sickness, or pretend to drink; any thing for an excuse to remain over night in the servants' rooms. The rest is simple enough; when all is still, open Maria's door, and thence go to Mrs. Egerton's. Take the child, put a plaster on its mouth if it wakes; place it in my hands, and then away to where you will, your passage paid, and a cool five hundred in your pocket.

JOHN.

You're all horse, you are—2.40 and a second to spare. I'll do it. As soon as—as—

HECTOR.

As what?

JOHN.

Why, you see, Mr. Aldini, I am getting to be a poor devil any way, and I don't want to put my neck in the noose, until—until I see the *tin*.

HECTOR.

Nor do I wish you. Read that.

JOHN, (*Reads.*)

Well, how does that help the matter? Is Satan coming up to open a synagogue?

HECTOR.

Perhaps he is here already. We will go and see. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III.

*Room in Simpkins' house.*

SIMPKINS, (*Reading and smoking—a bottle and glass on table.*)

Preaching for a poor congregation is slow; it don't pay. It hardly pays enough to keep soul, body, and — bottle together. I did hope to find one of the sisters with golden locks and silver speech; but I have shuffled all the widows and virgins, and there is not a diamond in the pack. Bless the simpletons; they are ready enough to take the dealer in fire and brimstone, but they can't have him without the cash. Bring that, and he will bow down, even if it be before a golden calf. Peddler, blacksmith, segar-dealer, preacher. Four professions! step by step on the ladder of respectability, but no money. The sons of Mammon monopolize that, (*knocking—SIMPKINS hides his segar and bottle under the table, places a newspaper over them, and the book in his pocket.*) Who's there? Come in,

*Enter* HECTOR.

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

My last card; I'll play it, and without humbug or hypocrisy.  
I have always lost at that game.

SIMPKINS.

Who under heaven are you?

HECTOR.

I am a poor devil *under* heaven. Hector Aldini, Esq., if  
you will help raise me *to* it.

SIMPKINS.

Whom do you want?

HECTOR.

Mr. Simpkins.

SIMPKINS.

And what do you want with him?

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

Segars. The odor is a good symptom. (*Aloud,*) I hope to  
be one of his flock soon.

SIMPKINS.

The hour is past for receiving visitors, or any of the flock.  
Did not the servant tell you so?

HECTOR.

She did,

SIMPKINS.

Then why this intrusion, fellow ?

*(Rises, the book falls from his pocket.)*HECTOR, *(Drawing himself up.)*

Take the beam out of your eye, and this shocking bad hat from my head, and you will see that I am not "a fellow," *(Picks up the book.)* Eugene Sue, very good! How can we preach against this wicked world, without knowing what its sins are ? *(Throws the book under the table.)* Ha!

SIMPKINS.

Out of my house this instant !

HECTOR, *(Taking off the newspaper.)*

Spirits! And table-tipping too, I suppose, or—tippling.

SIMPKINS.

Out of my house sirrah, instantly !

HECTOR, *(Aside.)*

He will do. *(Aloud,)* My dear Mr. Simpkins, you are losing time, and time *is* money in this case. Read that. *(Hands him a letter.)*

SIMPKINS, *(Reads.)*

"*Hector Aldini, Esq. : Dear Sir :* Your brother-in-law, Mr. Emerson, has bequeathed you five thousand dollars on condition that you reform, and join a church, which will be required as one of the proofs. The money is ready, and at your service on presentation of the proper vouchers. Your obd't serv'ts, Marsh & Munson, Wall street, Attorneys and Counsellors at law." Well ?

HECTOR.

No, it is not *well*; but you can make it so for both of us. Give me a letter of membership in your church, as you call it, and I will give you five hundred dollars of this legacy.

SIMPKINS.

But you are unregenerate.

HECTOR.

Un-re-fiddlesticks. Will you do it or not? I have others ready and willing; my friend is at the door, and has the promise from another preacher.

SIMPKINS.

Wait! wait! Don't hurry so, my friend. Sit down. What security have I that you will keep your word?

HECTOR.

Bring all the Bibles you have, and dictate your oaths. Take my order on the lawyers, and if that won't do, lock me up here and collect it yourself.

SIMPKINS, (*Aside.*)

I know the handwriting and the lawyers; they have had the honor of protesting my notes in the segar line. It is a perfect windfall. I'll do it, (*Writes.*) There's the letter, what next?

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

I am a saint at last. Now every thing is safe, I hope. (*Aloud.*) To the lawyers! to the lawyers!—but—could a divine walk arm in arm with that? (*Holds up his hat.*) My last dime has vanished into thin air—or spirits. How is your wardrobe off for hats?

[*Exit SIMPKINS, HECTOR opens the door, enter JOHN.*]



JOHN.

Well! Well! What did he say?

HECTOR.

All right. Read that, (*Hands him the letter.*)JOHN, (*Reads.*)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Bray vo!

HECTOR.

Now see Maria. You have the wax, and draught, and all the hints which I can give: the rest depends on you. Come with the brat to the negro cellar I pointed out. I will await you there.

JOHN.

It may be late.

HECTOR.

Be it forty nights in one and black as hate, you will find me. Go! go! and John Grant, have a care: I would lose my life sooner than this should fail. (*Exit. Enter SIMPKINS with a broad-brimmed hat and white tie.*) That is better. The saints themselves would give me the right hand of fellowship now. Come, my dear brother. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE IV.

*Room in Egerton's House.**Enter, MARIA, (Weeping.)*

I can not remain in this house. I must find some dark corner of the world to hide in. Yet where shall I go? I have

no home but this. No one left to ask a home from. My hands tremble when I attempt to dress the child, and Mrs. Egerton looks at my bent-down, tearless, eyes and takes the child herself. I feel her eye upon me always. Yet she asks no questions, and treats me oh! so kindly, it almost crushes me. She treats me as if I was her own sister, instead of her poor foster sister and servant. I can not remain. I feel as if I should choke when I am in her pure presence. And little Ernest, too, he looks up and asks me why I sing no more. She will discover all. I can not meet her scorn and live. Betrayed! deserted! False-hearted monster! Yet I love him still. (*Knocking. Enter JOHN. MARIA screams and throws herself into his arms.*) O John! it was a horrid dream, tell it was, in mercy. You will not desert me? Say you will not. I will go with you anywhere, work for you, do any thing to bear an honest name. I can not stay here now. O John! I can not live with shame upon my brow.

JOHN.

Cheer up, my pretty filly, you will come to your paces yet, and hold up your head with the best of them. I was poor when I saw you last, Maria, and couldn't keep a wife. I treated you as I did, because I felt down and disheartened myself; but now! I've got money! money! I've had a legacy left me, and am ready to marry you when you please.

MARIA.

How can I believe? You will not deceive me again, John? Oh! do not, do not, it will kill me. (*Sobs on his bosom.*)

JOHN.

Cheer up, you little simpleton. Hold up your head and think of your wedding-day. Why, it shall be next week, tomorrow, if you choose.

MARIA.

I don't care for money, John. Mrs. Egerton will keep me afterward, I hope, and I shall be no burthen to you at all.

JOHN.

Have *you* got any money, Maria?

MARIA.

Not a cent; I gave it all to you, and the last I borrowed for you,

JOHN.

No matter. I have plenty, and my little wife shall have plenty too. (*Takes a key from her pocket. Aside.*) Ah! this is it. (*Takes an impression in wax.*) You look ill, Maria.

MARIA.

O John! no wonder; no mortal knows what I have suffered for some time past.

JOHN. (*Returns the key to Maria's pocket.*)

It is over now. But still you look ill apart from that—I saw the Egertons in the street before I ventured in. They may return. I must go, but will come back this evening. You know how well the servants like me. I will be here to-night to treat them on my good fortune. Let me see you first alone, and I shall have more to tell. Good-by. All will yet be well. [Exit.

MARIA.

Heaven grant it. (*Sits down, covering her face with her hands.*)

## SCENE V. (DINAH'S cellar.)

DINAH, (*Solus.*)

Never seed so much gold dar afore. Ten dollar in eagles in dat ar hand. Dat's better'n begging or stealing. I'se rich, I is. I'se gwine to be richer, I is, (*Rings coin.*) No foolin dar. Five dollar ebbery blessed week to keep a little chile. Yah! Yah! Yah! One dem ar more'n keep me a month—keep me two month. Guess would so. Guess dat ar chile got no business to be no whar, I do, (*Stirs wash.*) Paint em black and call em little Dinah. Yah! yah! yah! I do dat ar. Five dollar made out of gold ebbery blessed week! Paint em blue and green too, ef he choose for dat ar, (*Bites coin.*) No foolin dar. 'Taint no 'count begging no more. No use being took up by dem stars no more for being poor. Dem stars nebber shine in de blessed sky, no way you can fix it, nohow. Got to sit up all night to wait for em. Well, guess I'd set up all night any day for ten dollars' worth gold eagle, I would, (*Gaps, sleeps.*) Who dar? (*Opens door.*) Well, I guess I'se dreaming, (*Gaps.*) I'se mighty sleepy any how. My! it's cold. Like to see dat ar chile. I would make my turnal fortune out him, ef it ebber do come, (*Sleeps, snores, knocking.*) Oh! my Lord a massy, what dat? (*Opens door, enter HECTOR, well dressed, with a false nose and whiskers.*)

DINAH.

All reddy, Massa. Whar am de chile?

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

My disguise has blinded her completely. It is well. Out of my way, and wait.

DINAH.

Oh! My! Lor Amighty!

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

The divine swore bravely to the *facts*. He is a trump, and I have played him well, and paid him well. Good, pious soul, *one* of his flock at least will never hear his sixthly, seventhly, and lastly. I am booked for heaven; there is my certificate, (*Shows letter of church-membership,*) and hell too, but I glut myself with vengeance. (*Shows money.*) This man John has a sharp capacity. A tool fresh from the fiends, and will do well. He must be got rid of. I have thought of that too. The ship is ready, and now to cage the bird and crush them. It will make me feel a man again to have them in my net. (*Enter JOHN with the child, false whiskers and nose, a handkerchief around the child's mouth.*) Mine! mine! Ha! ha! ha! By the imps of darkness, mine! (*Grasps the child by its clothes, and throws it on the bed; child moans; slaps it until it is quiet.*) Be quiet or I'll choke your life out. There is your brat, hag. Nobody saw you come in, John?

JOHN.

No one.

HECTOR.

Keep it close, or you'll never see another dollar. Is his chamber ready.

DINAH.

Yes, massa, bu'ful little room. All cleaned out, and saw-dust on de floor, (*Opens oven.*)

JOHN.

What, the oven?

HECTOR.

Yes, and a double door I have had put in, with stones between. The hag can leave him, and no one hear him cry, if he should take to that amusement. Now put it in its chamber. (*DINAH puts the child in the oven ; child cries and moans, sound lost as the door closes.*) You have done bravely, my boy.

JOHN.

And you look as if you had not been idle.

HECTOR.

See. (*Shows money.*)

JOHN.

By Moses ! The largest stakes I ever saw together.

HECTOR.

And there is your share No fuss, No noise ?

JOHN.

None. The drug worked like a charm. I left the footman asleep, Maria quiet as death, and no one else saw me. Mrs. Egerton did not awaken, and I stuffed the handkerchief into the child's mouth.

HECTOR.

You have earned, and well earned, your money. Now go. The ship is in the stream, and will sail with the morning tide. A boat will be in waiting for you at Whitehall. Here is the receipt for your fare, and every thing you require is on board. By the way, I have been thinking that this is a dangerous business you have been in. I would advise you never to return, as the frolic might cost you dear if you were caught.

JOHN.

They'll be distanced if they put on their best nags. I shouldn't like to fill a one-horse power at Sing Sing. Good-by, (*Aside.*) Five hundred dollars for a "roarer" and "crib-biter" and no guarantee. He's green. [*Exit.*]

HECTOR.

Now who has won? Ha! ha! ha! Lying coquette and pretentious popinjay. I would give what's left to be invisible and see your joy this morning. Your laughter and your loving talk over his empty bed. This awful thirst is burning me, my throat is parched for stimulant, from which my vengeance has debarred me, but I must not taste. I dare not taste. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE VI.

*Edith's dressing-room, bed in alcove, crib near it.*

EDITH.

*(Dressed in a morning-wrapper, her hair partly falling over her face and shoulders.)*

It is my sweet cherub's birthday. Oh! I have had such blessed dreams. Such fairy scenes, full of winged beings, and my boy amongst them, flying like a bird from tree to tree. Then he would alight upon my shoulders—in my arms, and float off again to beds of flowers. Perfumes filled the air, and tones from hidden instruments. I did not know what life was until Heaven sent him to unlock the mystery for me. The flowers are as fresh as they were yesterday. These for his ringlets. I have not kissed my angel yet. (*Goes with flow-*

*ers to the crib, draws the curtain, starts back, draws the curtain of her own bed, totters to the side-door, holding her hand on her heart.) Ernest! My husband! (Stopping to catch breath; then crosses to L., knocks.) Maria! Maria! (Enter MARIA, drowsy, half-conscious.) Maria, you frighten me. You should not have taken Ernest away before I kissed him. You know I like to curl his hair myself. He has not said his little prayer yet.*

MARIA.

*I have not seen him. (EDITH groans, holds her hand to her heart, and watches MARIA, who opens the curtain, closet, doors, etc.; crosses stage and knocks.) Mr. Egerton! Mr. Egerton! (Crosses the stage, rings violently, enter Servant.) Your master, where is he, and little Ernest?*

SERVANT.

*Mr. Egerton is in the conservatory, but I have not seen the child. He is not with him. (EDITH screams hysterically, then rushes out, screaming, until the screams are lost in the distance.)*

*(Knocking.) Enter ERNEST, (Solus.)*

*Edith, may I come in? I thought I heard a scream. What, up and out already? It is the boy's birthday that has aroused them thus. I have fair spoils for them both. (Opens casket.) A birthday present and surprise. Ha! My God, what's that? (Screams in the distance, nearer and nearer. EDITH rushes on, followed by MARIA and Servants, she seizes her husband by the shoulders, then sinks on her knees.)*



EDITH.

My child ! My child ! Give me my child !

ERNEST.

I have not seen him, love, this morning. (EDITH *groans and falls senseless.*)

*Curtain.*

## A C T    I I I .

## SCENE I.

DINAH'S Cellar. (DINAH discovered with the child. A knocking is heard.)

DINAH.

Get in dar honey, you be kilt if any body sees you; quick, honey. Who dar?

HECTOR.

It is I.

DINAH.

Oh! dat all right, massa.

[Enter HECTOR.

HECTOR, (*Aside.*)

They are moving heaven and earth to find the brat; I will move the other sphere to hide it. Rewards, advertisements, police officers, and the affair a town talk these four days. Money too, flowing like water. Let us see who will win. Win? I would kill the bantling with my own hands sooner than see it in her arms again. Who made me a leprosy—a foul and loathed thing? This child's mother. Who took from me the ambition of a man, and sent me forth to struggle in the meshes of drunkenness, and grovel at the Spirit God's feet a sot? That puling mockery's mother. This old hag must be more than bribed; she must be terrified. (*Aloud.*) Dinah! bring

out your brat, (*She draws the child from the oven.*) Why is its face not blacked, and hair off, you hag of Hades? Disobeying orders already, are you? Take that, (*Fires pistol with percussion cap only, by the side of her head.*) you whelp.

DINAH, (*Falling on her knees.*)

Oh! lor a marsy. Oh! lor, I'se killed dead. Oh! lor, don't kill me no more. I do ebery ting, 'deed I will, (*Runs for wash, and begins blacking the child's face.*)

HECTOR.

Now if you take that brat out of doors, or let any person see it, or find out that it is here, I will put a bullet through your head, although I missed you this time.

DINAH, (*Feeling her head.*)

Oh! lor, de bullet's dar, feel him going 'bout inside. I'se dead, I is, oh! lor.

HECTOR.

Who has been here?

DINAH.]

Nobody has, massa—devil may take me if he has. Nobody massa.

HECTOR.

Who has seen it?

DINAH.

Nobody, Massa, lor knows nobody seen it, lor knows dat ar.

HECTOR.

Deceive me again and I will blow your brains out.

DINAH.

Oh! my good blessed lor. Put down dat ar, it'll go off agin, and kill me straight—don't, don't. Oh! lor.

HECTOR.

There's money. Do my bidding and you will have plenty of it; and hearken, when that little imp is *dead*, I shall give you a hundred dollars to pay its funeral. Do you understand?

[Exit.

DINAH.

Yes I understand what I do. He wants me to kill that blessed little angel, he does. Can't do dat ar; might a could 'fore he come; can't do it now, nohow, cause he's a blessed little angel, he is. Felt good all de time he's been in dis house, I has. Can't do it nohow. Bu'ful nigger you make; stand still, bless em, chile, stand still, let ole mammy make bu'ful little nigger. You must be little nigger, honey, else ole mammy be shot dead, and you'll have nobody to keep dat bad man from killing you. I knows he's bad man, I do. Bu'ful blessed darkie, you be.

## SCENE II.

*Edith's dressing-room.*MARIA. (*Solus.*)

O God! What shall I do, what shall I do? Deserted, helpless, hopeless! This woe has made me selfish, pitiless. I have no tears even for the childless mother. Why should I? She has no *remorse* in all she suffers. That he should come here like a mocking fiend, and then for idle insult simply, seek burn the knowledge of his cruel infamy more deeply in my

soul. Come here without an object, save to lie. Crush me to death—with fond embraces. Tear out my eyes while praising them. With perfume poison me. Cold-hearted, heartless monster! What have I done to merit this? Whichever way I turn, shame and despair stare me in the face. I was her foster sister; we were playmates together; and since, and always, she has treated me more as her companion than her waiting-maid—and to requite it so. But where to go? Where? Where? I have no home but this—a home of misery to both. She seems to suffer a whole life of agony each day, and despair is turning her black hair gray. Mr. Egerton has heard of a stray child out of town; resembles his, they say. The large rewards bring him such information hourly, and he has gone to see if it be little Ernest. Heaven grant it may be he. But I must go; would that He who gave my life would take it back. I dare not force it to his presence, (*Holds her hands over her face, sobbing.* Enter EDITH, her hair somewhat gray—a bonnet in her hand.) You will not go out, madam? The messenger is expected hourly.

EDITH.

I would follow him, (*She falls into a chair, holds her hands to her heart and groans,*) and cheat the hours of their agony. (*Holds her hand to her heart from time to time, as if in sudden pain, and breathes deeply.* MARIA takes the bonnet.) How late is it?

MARIA.

Twenty minutes past two.

EDITH, (*Takes up a book.*)

I can not see the words. (*Crosses to L.—staggers—holds her hand to her heart—sits at table and takes up sewing.*) I can not see a stitch. How late is it?

MARIA.

Twenty-five minutes past two.

EDITH.

You told me that an hour ago. (*Recognizes a garment of little Ernest—utters a cry and falls back—Maria hides the garment—EDITH, with her hand on her heart, sways to and fro.*)

MARIA, (*Coming forward with hesitation.*)

Madam—I—I must—

EDITH.

Speak!

MARIA.

I—I can not remain here. I must leave your service, and this house, madam.

EDITH.

You are not in service. You are my foster sister and companion—why go? I can not blame you. O God! Would that I could leave it—and myself.

MARIA.

Oh! no! no! Indeed, it is not that. It breaks my heart to go. You have been mother, sister, friend, to me. All I have in the whole world; but—but—

EDITH.

Well?

MARIA.

I—I can not—

EDITH.

Speak on.

MARIA, (*Sobs.*)

I—John swore, with oaths a fiend would hardly dare to break, that he would marry me. I—I was a poor weak silly simpleton—and—he has deserted me.

EDITH, (*Aside.*)

I feared as much. (*Aloud.*) I understand you. You must not go— (*Aside.*) A grim companionship. (*Aloud.*) You will remain. You promise me? (*Falls on her knees, and sobbing, hides her face in EDITH's lap.*) Would I could weep—or pray. Go weep your fill; you shall be cared for. (*Enter messenger with a letter. EDITH springs up and grasps the letter—tears it open—her hands trembling violently.*) Maria! I can not see a word. (*MARIA steadies her hands; she lets the letter fall as she reads, and sinks to a chair—her hand on her heart.*)

MARIA, (*Reading.*)

“Dear wife, it is not Ernest. I am pursuing what farther phantoms offer.” (*Aside*) If my poor life could bring him back, with what joy I would yield it up. (*Enter DR. LAWRENCE.*)

EDITH, (*Starting up.*)

Well? (*Doctor shakes his head. EDITH sinks to her chair again.*)

DR. LAWRENCE, (*Aside.*)

The city has been ransacked, square by square, and yet no tidings. The large rewards spur on the seekers. The telegraphs flash their inquiries to neighboring towns. The police search every corner, and yet no tidings. And she upon whose

heart and spiritual being the gods have lavished so much care, is dying. Dying beyond the reach of every medicine, save one, and that locked up in this inscrutable mystery. (*Aloud.*) Dear madam, your friends, your husband, the police, and many more, are searching everywhere. It can not be delayed much longer. The child must be found at last. Our Saviour says: "Suffer little children to come unto me." He will watch over yours; and if he has taken—

EDITH.

No more! I would be alone. Your pardon, old friend. You will forgive a crushed and miserable being. Maria! I would speak with Dr. Lawrance. (*Exit MARIA.*) That girl has been most foully wronged by John, the late superintendent of my father's place. He must be found, and married to her. Spare nothing; least of all, money. This lies near my heart—next to— O God! (*Enter ERNEST—EDITH springs up, clutches her husband by the arms, and kneels.*)

ERNEST.

Well? (*ERNEST shakes his head and kisses her forehead—she shrinks to her chair again.*)

DR. LAWRENCE.

No news?

ERNEST.

No, old friend, and doubly friend, now in the hour of our affliction. None. Reports come thick and fast. I leave to-day for several distant places; from each there come a faint flash of hope. Here, I leave all to you, and these, (*Handing open letters.*) Let the most foolish and unlikely, as well as the others, have due attention. At four, I will see you at the



dépôt, (*Exit Doctor — ERNEST kneels.*) Dear Edith, many reports have reached me of stray children at various points. I go to all; and will telegraph and write you, love, from each.

EDITH.

Do! It breaks the horrible monotony with a new pang.

ERNEST.

I would not have you hope too strongly, dearest; but you wrong yourself in hugging to your breast this black despair. You wrong our child, (*EDITH holds her hand to her heart,*) too, should he be found, in tampering with a health which you require to train him; and you wrong our Father who has seen good to try us in this fiery furnace. Ask him for strength to bear, and it will come.

EDITH.

I can not pray.

ERNEST.

Besides, it is not many days

EDITH.

Eternity!

ERNEST.

Since—since—and any hour may bring us tidings, love. You will try, and be resigned, dearest, will you not?

EDITH.

Go! go! A moment lost may be a fatal one, (*Kisses her forehead — takes her passive hand, and exit.*) O God! My child! my child!

## SCENE III.

DINAH's cellar—a hole in the floor—DINAH and child discovered.

Dar chile, honey, nice soft straw in dat ar box for you, get in, honey. Don't say nothing when I put you down dar, else dey kill you, dey will, and put your ole mammy in prison. Star bin here. Frighten me to death, he did. Look at oven-door; see stones dar; look 'spicious, as ef he'd come agin. Twon't do dare no longer. I git shot for losing you, chile; git took off to prison for having you; can't be right anyway. Nebber was before in my life, nor since, no how. Bless you, deary, you aint bit afeerd to be buried, you aint, (*Puts box in the hole.*) Dere candy, honey; have candy ebery time it goes in dar. Nebber speak when I talk to some body, chile; dey kill me and you too, (*Knocking—DINAH covers the hole and runs about.*) Oh my lor, what I do, nothing is ready, what I do. Who dar?

HECTOR.

It is I, Dinah.

DINAH.

O bless de lor, I thought it was them stars come agin, I did.

*Enter* HECTOR.

HECTOR. (*Aside.*)

I am scorching here, yet dare not drink until the brat is dust again. My throat is fire, and yet I dare not quench it while this nightmare lives. Once tasted, and the rage for wine comes like a whirlwind, and my tongue is loosed. I dare not, lest they discover all, bolt me in a cell, and laugh at my

plotting. No! no! and yet revenge is bought at heavy cost. I would crush its life out if I dared. Ay, sell it for a little glass of wine. (*Aloud.*) Dinah, I— here is—*medicine* for the child. It may be sick. Why is this place open? (*Clutches* DINAH.) Where is the imp?

DINAH.

Dar, Massa, all right, dar dōwn in de ground. (*Pulls up the boards.*)

HECTOR, (*Starting back.*)

Not—not dead, Dinah?

DINAH.

No—yes—dat is, Massa, he *is* dead. Sure enough, dead. (*Aside,*) I'se so scared—(*Aloud,*) shall I pull ~~de~~ chile out, Massa; show em? He's dead, sure enough.

HECTOR.

No! no! Stop! Come here, come away, you murdering hag. Here is your money. Dig the hole deep (*Aside*) down, down to the fire, *my brethren*, drivel over. Dead! dead! Ha! ha! I did not kill it. Wine! wine! [*Exit.*]

DINAH.

O lor, what I bin and gone and done. Come so quick, like didn't know what I *was* 'bout. Made my tarnal fortune any how; 'nough to live on all my life. Take care ole Dinah. He come agin, find chile 'live an' kicking, he kill you sure enough. Come up, dare, honey, get your face washed. You aint nigger no more, you aint.

*Curtain.*

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Street.*

(*Enter, R. and L., MARIA and MRS. ALBERTSON.*)

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Well met, Maria. You remember me, do you not?

MARIA.

Yes, very well indeed. How have you been?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Quite well. How is my old friend, Mrs. Egerton? Has she quite recovered from the effect of losing her little boy?

MARIA.

No, and never will. The past year has been a weary one to her. An age indeed.

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Oh! dear, how dreadful! Do you know, Maria? I have heard so much of my old friend's benevolence, that I am dying to call on her. I want her to subscribe to help our society send out some such nice young men to convert the foreign heathen in—in Siam, or Kamschatka, or somewhere. It is all in my book.

MARIA,

Could they not be better employed in converting the domestic heathen?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

I don't mean that. I mean *the* heathen: we can't have any heathen here, you know—we are all Christians. *Do* you think I could see Mrs. Egerton? Oh! if she could only meet those young men, I know she would subscribe in a minute.

MARIA.

Nothing is easier than obtaining access to her. She will see you on her reception-day.

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Reception-day? Does she receive again? I am glad to hear that. Oh! she will soon recover her spirits if she mixes in the world. Which is her day?

MARIA.

It is to-day, Wednesday. Will you come?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

No, not now. I have to examine a new bonnet at Madame Malherbe's, and to call at Stewart's. I will be there in an hour. Tell her I am coming, please. Good morning.

MARIA.

Good morning, madam.

SCENE II. *Library.*

(EDITH and MARIA discovered. EDITH, with gray hair, seated at a writing-table. Table covered with letters, papers, memorandum books, etc. Bundles and baskets lying about. She writes, folds, and arranges rapidly. Open door, room beyond with sewing-girls. Bench at wing extending behind scene; women, boys, and girls, some with baskets, sitting.)

MARIA.

Shall I not send the others away? There are but few of them left, and you have done enough to-day to fatigue any one with double your strength. My dear madam, let me persuade you to take some rest; indeed it pains me to see you work so.

EDITH.

No! This is my rest. If you be fatigued, go to your chamber. I shall not require you further, (*Continues writing.*)

MARIA, (*Aside.*)

And so the hours and days go on, and this unutterable longing for her child is gnawing at her heart. This tearless, calm despair is drying up the fountains of her life, and so the end approaches silently, but sure. Her feeble steps tell that; they grow more feeble daily. All these weary hours since early morning, she has been writing and arranging, and examining the cases of despair or poverty which come before her. All collected through the week by her too, in the lowest haunts of poverty and wretchedness. To the strong but poor she offers work; to the sinful, warning; to the sick, medicines and nourishment; and to the dying, hope. I never dreamed there was such misery in the world. My own seems trifling to it,

Such squalor and despair as I sometimes see, it makes me shudder; but her open hand and pure spirit come, and all things bloom and smile again, except herself. With her, tears, smiles, and hopes are of the past. The poor will lose an angel guardian when she dies. [*Enter Servant with a letter.*]

EDITH, (*Reads.*)

Call Bridget, Maria. (*Enter BRIDGET.*) Bridget, I have found a good place for you. Here are the directions.

BRIDGET, (*Weeps.*)

I had rather stay here, ma'am, and work for you.

EDITH.

It can not be; your place is wanted by some other child of misery, as you were once. (*BRIDGET kneels and kisses EDITH's hand.*)

BRIDGET.

God bless you, now and always.

EDITH, (*Puts her hand to her heart and breathes deeply.*)

The next.

*Enter* MRS. ALBERTSON.

MRS. ALBERTSON, (*Aside.*)

The servant would not take my card, but said, Go in. I met a lot of ragamuffins on the stairs: I wonder what it means. (*Aloud,*) O my dear, dear Mrs. Egerton! I am so glad to see you again. You are looking *charming*, and black is so becoming. (*Aside,*) Why she is gray, and so much younger than I am.

EDITH.

What is your business here?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Oh! I have no business. Mr. A. always attends to that horrid stuff; but our society wants to raise the necessary funds to send out some such nice young men, to convert the heathen in Siam, I believe. It is in my book, and I want you to subscribe. Oh! I do wish you could see them.

EDITH.

Whom, the heathen?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Oh! horrid! No! The young divines we intend to send there.

EDITH.

How much do you give yourself?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Who? I? O dear! I give my time, and take all this trouble for the cause. I couldn't give any thing. Mr. A. only allows me five thousand a year, and you know a single cape or shawl costs a quarter of that. But I obtain such lots of money from those useless bachelors about town, and good-natured merchants.

EDITH.

Why do you do this?

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Oh! it fills up my time so nicely, and keeps me from having the blues. I don't let it interfere with any thing else, and it puts me in good spirits, and makes me enjoy a ball or a party so much. And then you have such a name for benevolence if



you collect large sums. Will you not put your name down for \$500? It will *look* so well.

EDITH, (*Sternly.*)

I have nothing to give, and would give nothing if I had millions. I am occupied.

MRS. ALBERTSON.

Well—I—dear me—what *does* it all mean—but—Mrs. Egerton—good morning. [*Exit.*]

EDITH.

I am ready, Maria. (*Writes as a woman advances feebly.*) Mrs. Smith, you are too weak to come out yet. How is your boy?

MRS. SMITH.

Better ma'am, thank you, a little better, not much. I am afraid he will die. He would have been dead long ago, if you had not helped us.

EDITH.

There are the medicines for him. I will come with the doctor in the morning. You have not told me yet how you lost him.

MRS. SMITH.

It is not much to tell, ma'am, though it nearly killed me. He was playing on board of a steamship, and it went off before he knew it. He was so frightened that he hid himself, until he was too hungry to remain in his hiding-place any longer. Then the captain and crew abused him. He was taken to Panama, and they would not bring him back. He got some body to write, but I never received the letter. It broke me down, it did, for I thought he was dead. Then it took him a whole year to do odd jobs, or beg, or any thing to get money

enough to come home, and he came home with a fever. I caught it from him, and then you found us, heaven bless you! (EDITH *breathes deeply, and places her hand on her heart several times during recital.*)

EDITH.

Take this work with you. You must not work much yet. I shall pay you by the day until it is done, and you must not finish it in less than a week. Maria, send Thomas with her. (MARIA *rings. Enter Servant. Exit SMITH and Servant.*) The next, Maria. (Boy comes forward. EDITH *looks at him and frowns; hands MARIA a piece of paper.*) Ernest was to inquire into this case. (Exit MARIA.) What do you want?

BOY.

Some money to pay our rent with. Got ten sisters and brothers, and father and mother, and nothing to eat for four days.

EDITH.

(Enter MARIA; she hands a slip of paper. EDITH *rises to her full height.*)

You are a liar and an impostor, boy. Your career of vice has begun early. Take heed, and repent. God sees every thing you do, and hears every word you say. There! above you! (Boy *retreats, looks up and back frightened, drops his basket, picks it up hurriedly, and exit with thumb at his nose.*)

EDITH, (*Writes.*)

The next, Maria.

MARIA.

There are no more, madam. (Enter DR. LAWRENCE.)

EDITH.

Take this note, Maria, to its address, and see if the case requires my attention. [Exit MARIA.]

DR. LAWRENCE.

John is found at last.

[EDITH.

That is well, and where?

DR. LAWRENCE.

He was traced, as you know, to Cuba, Rio, Valparaiso, and there lost sight of. Afterwards, I heard of him in California, and sent a messenger who reached San Francisco a long time after he had left that place for New-York, by the Horn. The messenger returned by the Isthmus, and so came first. The other vessel came to-day, and John has been taken from her to the New-York Hospital, dying. What is done must be done quickly.

EDITH.

It is well. See that the messenger be abundantly rewarded. And this man?

DR. LAWRENCE.

Seems penitent, and is willing to marry her. I told him if he recovered, they should be well cared for. But he can not live. She must come with me at once.

EDITH.

She will return soon, and I will send her. See that a clergyman and all is ready. (*Holds out her hand.*) Old friend, I am poor in thanks.

DR. LAWRENCE.

I should feel poorer with them. You owe me none. I have had him placed in the superintendent's room; she will find us there. [Exit.

EDITH, (*Writes, then reads.*)

"John is found at last, Maria, and is ready to marry you. But he is dying. Go at once to the New-York Hospital, and in the superintendent's room, you will find the clergyman, Dr. Lawrence, and your *husband*." I will place it on her table; I would not see her now, and want no thanks. [Exit.] (*Re-enter EDITH, she rings. Enter Servant.*)

EDITH.

Is Mr. Egerton in?

SERVANT.

Yes ma'am, in the library.

EDITH.

Tell him I will see him here, at his leisure.

SERVANT.

Miss Maria has gone out, and told me to send Mary to put away these things.

EDITH.

No, I will do that myself. Bring in the large trunk from Maria's room. (*Exit Servant, reënter with trunk, exit.*) Thomas! This is not the— (*Sees a ribbon hanging from the trunk, and starts, opens the trunk and takes out, one by one, little ERNEST's hat and garments, folds them to her bosom, utters a cry, weeps passionately, kneels and clasps her hands in an attitude of prayer, crosses to the table, drops a garment, picks*

*it up greedily, lays the garments on the table and about her, and kisses them, weeping. Enter ERNEST. EDITH rises, utters a passionate cry and sobs upon his bosom.)* See here. *(Leads him to the chair, ERNEST sits down, and passes a handkerchief over his eyes. EDITH sits at his feet, an arm resting on his lap.)* See, Ernest, his little hat; I took it from his head the evening before—before. The ringlets fell in clusters round his head, and he looked up in my face and wondered what his father would give him on his birthday. I undressed him myself that night. He said his little prayer, and as I kissed him the last—last time, Ernest, said, wake me early, mother. They were his last words. *(Weeps.)* This is his necklace; you bought it on his second birthday. I unclasped it too that night, and hung it on the crib. And this, *(Takes up an embroidered garment, lets it fall, rises to her knees and sobs as she bends over ERNEST's lap,)* I worked it myself, he never wore it. *(Rises, and puts her arms round ERNEST's neck.)* Ernest, I have been very, very selfish these long and weary months.

ERNEST.

No, love, indeed you have not.

EDITH.

But it has gone. It seemed as if some demon gripped my heart and would not let it beat as Nature bade it. A horrid nightmare vision filled my soul and darkened all the sky between my God and me. But it has passed, and these things, these little memories of my boy, have sent a gleam of light into the darkness, and I have wept and prayed at last. *(Enter MARIA with an open letter.)*

MARIA.

My dear! *(Sees EDITH and ERNEST together, hesitates, sees trunk, holds up her hands, and exit.)*

EDITH.

But, Ernest, wrapped in this black despair, I have forgotten you. All that your strong heart suffered, all your strong hands have done. Heaven pardon me ; I will try, Ernest, to deserve its pardon and yours. (*Kneels and rests on ERNEST's lap.*)

ERNEST.

Then my poor wife suffers less ?

EDITH.

No, I do not, Ernest, but I feel that strength is coming from on high to help me bear it, and I can pray now, can pray that—that—he may be found at last. (*Takes garment to her bosom, and sobs on ERNEST's lap.*)

*Curtain.*

## A C T V.

## SCENE I.

*(Superintendent's room, New-York Hospital, Dr. LAWRENCE, MARIA, JOHN, Clergyman, Superintendent, etc., discovered. JOHN dying, held up by the attendants. End of marriage ceremony in dumb show. JOHN unable to speak, bows, signs certificate, aided by clergyman. All sign certificate, MARIA comes forward, holding and kissing it.)*

MARIA.

A wife, a wife at last. It has a name, and need not blush to live.

DR. LAWRENCE.

He tries to speak—I think to you, Maria. *(MARIA holds her ear to his lips, shakes her head, listens again, then closer, trembles violently, catches the Doctor by the arm.)*

MARIA.

O Doctor! quick, I would give half of my life to have one minute added to his. Have you no drugs? No stimulants?

DR. LAWRENCE.

I have, and will give the most powerful; they may relieve him.

MARIA.

Quick! quick! on my knees, I beg, Flash but a moment's life there, if no more. I think he has a secret, I would give my own poor life to know. For Edith's sake, quick. (*Doctor gives potion, JOHN starts up and utters a cry of pain.*)

JOHN.

I stole the child and gave it to Hector Aldini. (*Sinks back, dead.*)

MARIA.

*Monster!* Alas! my husband.

DR. LAWRENCE.

This is awful. But still a clue at last. I will go at once for Mr. Egerton. And you?

MARIA.

Go quick; I shall remain. You will find I have not been idle. Don't breathe a word of hope yet, I pray to my poor mistress. It would kill her if it turned out to be another falsehood of this wicked man. (*Exit Dr. L.*) Will you send me a trusty messenger? I will pay him well. (*Exit Superintendent.*)

MARIA, (*Writes, then reads.*)

"We have a clue at last, about Mr. Egerton's lost child. You will please send at once the two officers who have been so untiring in their efforts in this case to the hospital, in the Superintendent's room. Mr. Egerton will meet them there. The Hector Aldini, of whom you have spoken often with Mr. Egerton, must be arrested at once. If he could be arrested and brought with the officers it would be well." (*Enter Messenger.*)



Take that to the Chief's office, and give it into his own hands. There is money—quick! (*Exit Messenger.*)

My wedding-day. Alas! my husband there a corpse. My bridal wreath—tears. For friends, the sick and dying. The bridal couch a tomb. Yet I would have it so. Linked with that? A living being? It would kill me. And yet I loved this man, so madly and so weakly. Stole little Ernest? Stole the child of her who sheltered and protected me in my hour of desolation, and crushed her to the earth? Oh! it is monstrous. And I thank heaven that it has taken him away. Have they suspected this, and kept it from me? There are no words will paint their generous care. (*Enter First Officer.*)

MARIA.

I am glad to see you. We have met before about this dreadful business.

FIRST OFFICER.

Yes, miss, we have, but to little purpose so far. What is in the wind now?

MARIA.

This dead man lying here, confessed, as he died, that he stole our little Ernest.

FIRST OFFICER.

Who is it?

MARIA.

The superintendent, some years since, of old Mr. Carlton's place.

FIRST OFFICER.

The man we have searched for, everywhere. What else?

MARIA.

And gave it to Hector Aldini. The old discarded lover of Mrs. Egerton. All this you know about, I think?

FIRST OFFICER.

Yes, and have watched him many a weary night and day, without result. Is that all?

MARIA.

All. The rest must be left to you. I expect Mr. Egerton here every minute. Can this man be found?

[FIRST OFFICER.]

We know his haunts well. He has become a low degraded being. Up twice for drunkenness this very week. My brother officer is seeking him. (*Enter Dr. L. and ERNEST.*)

MARIA.

O Mr. Egerton! is it not horrible?

ERNEST.

It is indeed. I can not call you by that hated name.

MARIA.

Then you know all. (*Kneels.*) Pardon! pardon!]

ERNEST.

Rise, girl, you have earned a pardon ten times over. May Heaven pardon you, as I do.

MARIA.

Have you no hope?]

ERNEST.

None! I dare not until I see my child again. What have you done?

MARIA.

Sent for the officers, and— (*Enter Second Officer with ALDINI, drunk.*)

ERNEST.

Scoundrel and hell-hound! (*Clutches HECTOR by the throat.*) I shall go mad. Dr. Lawrance, do what you will, I am unmanned. (*HECTOR sings Old Hundred.*)

HECTOR.

Bray—yandy smashes all round, boys. I'll pay. You old fo—gy. Smashes!

FIRST OFFICER, (*Shaking him.*)

John stole Mr. Egerton's child.

HECTOR.

Smashes!

FIRST OFFICER.

And gave it to you. We shall imprison you, unless you tell us where it is.

HECTOR.

SMASHES! Smash—es! Simpkins, smashes! Brandy! mem—member Simpkins' church. (*Sings Old Hundred. Officers shake him, then suddenly force him down so that his hands and face come in contact with the corpse. HECTOR shrinks back sobered, and shuddering.*)

FIRST OFFICER.

He told us all. Speak, or you are a doomed man.

HECTOR.

Keep him off, I didn't kill him. Keep him off. He stole the child. I didn't. I gave it to Dinah, at the negro house, in Anthony street. (*Officers exchange looks.*) Child's dead.

ERNEST.

Villain! (*Doctor and others restrain ERNEST.*)

HECTOR.

Dinah killed it. (*Officers attempt to drag him towards the corpse, he pulls back affrighted.*) It's all true. I swear it's all true. I will go and show you. Don't! don't! Let me go!

FIRST OFFICER.

I know the place, and have searched it long ago. Gather what more you can, and I will see this Dinah. (*To Second Officer.*) Secure him and meet me there. [*Exit.*]

MARIA.

Heaven grant that it is false, but better death than this horrible uncertainty.

## SCENE II.

DINAH'S cellar. *Child, and DINAH discovered; child decked with bits of ribbon.*

DINAH.

Money's all gone, chile, have to work now. Get suthing to eat. Thought a hundred dollar would last all dis yer life, I

did, but it didn't no-how. All gone, chile, got to work now, get bread for ole mammy and honey. Lor bless you chile, how kinder pokey you grows. Guess you're gwine to die sure enough. I give you ebbery ting I tink on, but you don't eat nothing, you don't. Wish dat ar man war dead, I do. Den ole black mammy look for tother mammy quick enough, darsent though, nohow. (*Knocking.*) Who dar? Oh! lor, chile! get in quick. (*Puts the child and box in the hole.*) Who dar?

FIRST OFFICER.

Open the door. (*Enter first officer.*)

DINAH.

Well dar, door's open. What you want?

FIRST OFFICER.

Well, Dinah, how are you?

DINAH.

Putty well, no thanks to you nohow. (*The Officer opens closets and oven, and sounds wall and floor.*)

FIRST OFFICER.

Dinah, you had a child concealed here a year ago.

DINAH.

No, I didn't—no, I didn't, didn't have no chile. Can't come dat ar nohow.

FIRST OFFICER.

Dinah, I am afraid I shall have to take you to prison if you don't tell me what has become of this child.

DINAH.

No, you can't take dis ere chile to prison, you can't. Don't try now. Works for my living, I does. Got no chile, never had none nowhar.

FIRST OFFICER.

It won't do, Dinah, you must go to prison or tell us about the child, and if you do tell, look here, (*Shows gold,*) you will have plenty of that, and not go to prison.

DINAH.

Like to have dat ar mighty well. Don't know 'bout no chile. Can't say nothing about nothing, don't know nothing 'bout no chile, I don't. (*Enter Second Officer.*)

SECOND OFFICER.

What luck, Bill?

FIRST OFFICER.

None. I have searched everywhere, and she denies of course.

SECOND OFFICER.

What will you do next?

FIRST OFFICER.

I am somewhat nonplussed.

SECOND OFFICER.

Have you tried the tender dodge?

FIRST OFFICER.

No.

SECOND OFFICER.

Try that on first; you are great at it; and then the pistol.

FIRST OFFICER.

Dinah, I'm a man—

DINAH.

No, you aint no man, I knows you well enough. You's officer. You aint no man. (*Both officers pull off their coats and caps.*)

FIRST OFFICER.

And have a wife and little children, and when I go home at night they kiss me, and cling about my knees, and love me; I work all day for these dear little ones, so that I can have money to buy them bread. I am paid for finding lost children, and putting bad people in prison.

DINAH.

Yes, you put bad people in prison—put me in 'cause I beg, dat's it.

FIRST OFFICER.

Now, there was a beautiful lady who had a pretty boy, that she loved better than her life. The little boy had blue eyes and flaxen hair.

DINAH, (*Aside.*)

Dat's him, sure 'nough.

FIRST OFFICER.

And one night he was stolen by a bad man, and carried off. The poor mother went raving about the streets, calling for her child; and she called for him all night and all day; and cried

and tore out her hair. (*The two officers take out their handkerchiefs, and commence sobbing; DINAH bursts out crying.*) And there the poor mother is dying for her child—crying for her child; and now the bad man who stole it is dead. (*DINAH springs up, and falls on her knees.*)

DINAH.

You don't say dat ar—you don't say dat ar?

FIRST OFFICER.

And he said, when he was dying, that you had the child, and was so good to it; and if we would take care of old Dinah all the rest of her life, Dinah would tell us all about it. Won't Dinah tell the poor white mother where her child is?

DINAH.

You sure dat ar man dead—real dead—you sure dat?

FIRST OFFICER, (*Wiping his eyes, and kneeling.*)

Dinah, before heaven I swear, I saw him dead before I came here.

DINAH.

Got no pistol or nothing 'bout him? He shoot me dead, ef he is dead; ef he's got any pistol, he will.

FIRST OFFICER.

Dinah, I took it away from him myself, after he was dead. See, there it is.

DINAH.

Put down dat ar.



FIRST OFFICER.

See, Dinah, all this gold is for you ; and if you give us the child, you shall stay with it, and always be its second mother.

DINAH.

Be its tother mammy, and dat ar man dead? I do dat ar, anyhow. Come along, chile, (*Lifts up the boards,*) white mammy's found ; come along, chile.

FIRST OFFICER.

Why, it's dead.

DINAH, (*Lifting out the child.*)

No, 'taint ; it's only 'feer'd.

FIRST OFFICER, (*Taking up the child.*)

Alive!—alive! A thousand for each of us! Bill, go and tell them, quick ; it is only a square or two. [*Exit Second Officer.*] You blessed piece of property! we are going to take you home to your ma. What is your name?

CHILD.

Ernest.

FIRST OFFICER.

Ernest what?

CHILD.

Little Ernest.

FIRST OFFICER.

That will do; it's all right. You are worth your weight in silver—you are. Take out your fancy fixins, Dinah, (*DINAH unties ribbons.*) They will be here in a minute, and you will make your fortune, I guess.

DINAH.

Don't care 'bout dat ar much now. Likes de chile like I was its own ole mammy. Let me stay longside chile; dat all I ask any how. (*Enter ERNEST, MARIA, and DR. LAWRENCE.*)

ERNEST, (*Catches the child to his heart, then kneels.*)

Almighty Father, I thank thee! (*MARIA embraces the child, weeping; it clings to each.*)

DINAH.

Yah! yah! yah! Dat all right; dat am.

DR. LAWRENCE, (*To MARIA.*)

You had better break the happy news to Edith. He is not fit to do it. We will follow you at once.

SCENE III. EDITH'S *dressing-room*.

(*Edith discovered; she reads; little ERNEST's clothes lying about.*)

EDITH.

"I am with the dead, dear wife! the corpse of your Maria's husband, and may be detained all night." It is well—it is very well. They are married, then. I am glad of that.

(*Groans ; puts her hand to her heart.*) It is near the bitter end, and I shall never see my boy again. If he be found, he will grow to manhood without a mother's care. (*Starts up.*) O God! that I could see him once, and die, (*Totters feebly, and sinks to a chair again ; her hand on heart ;*) and I must die without. If I knew him to be *dead*, then I could die in peace ; but to grow up, perhaps, amongst thieves and vagabonds. (*She holds her hands over her face, and shudders.*) I have not told them that I am dying ; perhaps they see it in my feeble step. These must be buried with me. The troubled spirit will rest calmer then. (*Kisses the garments, one by one, and weeps.* Enter MARIA ; *they embrace, sobbing ; EDITH sinks to her chair.*)

MARIA.

The sky is less dark ; there is a glimpse of light upon the horizon, which tells that the sun will rise again.

EDITH.

It has risen Maria—faithful friend ! You are a wife. Your child has a name ; I am very glad. (*Groans.*)

MARIA.

You suffer, madam. Your sufferings are nearly over.

EDITH.

I know they are. They are, indeed.

MARIA.

It is not of my child I would speak, dear mistress, but of your own.

EDITH.

You are right, and I thank you, dear one ! It shall be mine

while I may live—alas! not long—and Ernest's, when I die.  
He will care for it and you, Maria.

MARIA.

But—madam—indeed——

EDITH.

No thanks—no thanks. I have shed such blessed tears  
since you have been away. (*She notices her gray hair ; looks  
in the glass in a work-box.*) How long is it, Maria, since—  
since——

MARIA.

Only a year, dear madam !

EDITH.

Eternity! I have lived more than long enough for this in  
those few months.

MARIA.

It will soon be over now. O madam——

EDITH.

It will indeed. See, Maria, what I have found—all these!—  
all gathered up, and kept by you so carefully. How can I  
thank you ?

MARIA.

Listen to me, madam. (*Aside.*) How shall I tell it? (*Enter  
ERNEST, Child, DOCTOR, and DINAH. MARIA warns them back  
with her hand, and falls on her knees.*) (*Aloud.*) You will  
break my heart, if you will not understand. It is of little Ernest  
I would speak. (*EDITH rises, grasps MARIA's shoulder, and  
trembles. The child has approached.*)

CHILD.

Mother! (EDITH *turns, utters a long, passionate cry, clasps her child to her bosom, presses her hand on her heart, and sinks to her chair.*)

DR. LAWRENCE, (*Raising her head.*)

Dead!—dead!

ERNEST, (*Kneeling.*)

Almighty Father! help me to bear this. (*Groans.*)

MARIA.

The highest heaven is wealthier by a soul. Would I were with her!

*Curtain.*





